

## REQUEST FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS (RFIP)

### SMART GROWTH IN BROWNFIELD COMMUNITIES - BFSG-03

“One of the best ways to arrest urban sprawl is to develop brownfields and make them productive pieces of land, where people can find work and employment. By one estimate, for every one acre of redeveloped brownfields, we save 4.5 acres of open space.” – *President George W. Bush, January 11, 2002*

#### I. OVERVIEW

U.S. EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division is seeking innovative proposals which encourage smart growth within brownfield communities and reduce pressure on open space.

In January 2002, EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman announced a new initiative to help communities achieve smart growth. This initiative – *Open Space Preservation Strategies for Promoting Smarter Growth and Environmental Protection* – is comprised of two key components. The first provides assistance to communities to help prioritize open space for preservation (see website listed in Section XII for more detail). The second – and focus of this RFIP – will help selected existing brownfields showcase communities or brownfields assessment demonstration pilots incorporate smart growth into their planning, redevelopment, and/or revitalization efforts.

#### Smart Growth: The Brownfields/Open Space Connection

Smart growth is development that grows the economy, enhances the community, and protects public health and the environment. Smart growth efforts are often characterized by a common set of principles (see Background section). Embedded within these principles is a recognition of the connection between developing virgin land on the metropolitan fringe and re-using brownfield and other infill sites. The more difficult it is to use infill and previously developed sites, the more development will encroach on greenfields. Market conditions sometimes limit redevelopment options, but often barriers to reuse arise from lack of coordination among agencies, complications in securing title to the property, outdated zoning and building codes, lack of awareness of government assistance programs, and other institutional/non-market factors. As a result of these barriers, development which could have been accommodated on infill properties including brownfields may be shifted to greenfield sites.

When brownfield communities engage in efforts to revitalize brownfield sites, they can leverage additional benefits for local governments, investors, and area residents through smart growth activities. When redevelopment is transit-accessible, contains a mix of uses, or is compactly constructed with access to parks or plazas, there are community, environmental, and economic benefits.

#### Environmental Benefits

Development can have large environmental impacts. Communities can minimize those impacts through infill development and particularly through reuse of brownfield sites. Re-use of existing sites can upgrade wastewater infrastructure, re-use impervious surface, improve on-site stormwater management, remediate contaminated soils, protect groundwater and provide greater local transportation choices. For more information on the environmental impacts of development patterns and practices see the EPA Publication entitled Our Built and Natural Environment (for report go to [www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/publications.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/publications.htm)).

Brownfield communities can minimize development impacts by applying smart growth techniques and preserving green space. This solicitation will help brownfield communities by offering support to carry out smart growth activities, improving the environmental performance of new development and easing the pressures on critical open space.

## II. BACKGROUND

U.S. EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division (Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation) focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental and public health goals by protecting sensitive habitats and watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from impervious surfaces, reducing air emissions by providing a variety of transportation choices, and encouraging infill development and cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields properties.

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health and the environment. Smart growth is frequently characterized by the following principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

## III. WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Eligible applicants are limited solely to units of government that are presently designated EPA Brownfields Showcase Communities or Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilots.

## IV. ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

EPA is seeking proposals which focus on implementing smart growth in brownfield communities. We are specifically interested in projects that feature innovative community actions or successful responses to barriers to smart growth implementation. **GRANT AWARDS WILL NOT BE ISSUED TO FUND PROPOSALS FOR TRAINING, RESEARCH, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE THE INVENTORY OF BROWNFIELD SITES, SITE ASSESSMENTS, REMEDIATION OF BROWNFIELD SITES, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, OR SITE PREPARATION.** Funding for these activities is available under section 104(k)(6) of the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act. See the EPA Brownfields web site for details ([www.epa.gov/brownfields/html-doc/hr2869.htm](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/html-doc/hr2869.htm)).

Proposals are encouraged under any of the categories described below. Products might include, but are not limited to, policy papers, case studies, workshops, educational materials, quantitative models, or on-site demonstrations.

### 1. Improving the regulatory climate for smart growth redevelopment of infill properties.

What are current regulatory, institutional, or other barriers to infill in brownfield communities, and how can policies that encourage smart growth help to overcome them? Possible areas for activities include, but are not limited to: efforts to improve access to financing for infill sites; more flexible approaches to zoning; modified level-of-service standards; more responsive building codes for rehabilitation; synthesis of planning documents to facilitate better land use and zoning results; and regulatory incentives (such as expedited permitting) for infill development.

### 2. Improving the approach to redevelopment of specific infill sites by incorporating smart growth.

What are techniques for encouraging smart growth on infill development sites in brownfield communities? Possible areas for activities include, but are not limited to: site design/redesign efforts to incorporate mixed use features, a range of transportation choices (bike, transit, auto), or access to parks or civic

plazas; development of a smart growth scorecard to evaluate and select redevelopment proposals; a design charrette evaluating smart growth opportunities on infill sites; and community-based efforts to link infill development to concurrent restoration efforts of brownfield communities.

### 3. Linking infill development to open space preservation.

How can communities make a more explicit link between the preservation of open space on the urban fringe, and the redevelopment of infill sites in brownfield communities? Possible areas for activities include, but are not limited to: support for regional activities to articulate the benefits of linking the two areas; improved integration of open space preservation techniques into infill programs, or vice versa; evaluation of how local property tax policies can be modified to better encourage open space preservation or infill development; and a transfer of development rights program from open spaces to infill sites.

#### Illustrative Sample Activities\_\_\_\_\_

The following list illustrates the types of activities that could be considered for funding. It is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive:

- Support for design assistance to incorporate smart growth principles into development projects within brownfield communities, thereby increasing benefits to the environment.
- Development of policy recommendations for local leaders on how to better coordinate open space preservation efforts on the urban fringe with infill programs in cities and suburbs.
- Support to study the feasibility of adopting revised codes for building rehabilitation that have the effect of increasing investment in existing neighborhoods, and creating greater momentum and predictability for new investors on infill sites.
- Development of a tool to assess and measure smart growth net benefits (e.g. access to transportation options which will improve the region's air quality, or incorporation of urban parks and open spaces) for infill plan options in brownfield communities.
- Demonstration of an inclusive visioning process to develop a plan for restoring an infill site as a mixed-use facility in order to meet neighborhood needs for services within walking or biking distance.
- Research to support the creation of a development rights trading program, which would transfer the rights to develop land from areas slated for open space preservation to areas already serviced by infrastructure.
- Support to evaluate the infill barriers encountered by rural brownfield communities, and how impediments to redevelopment of such sites are hindering efforts to encourage economic development or open space preservation.
- Demonstration of methods to develop a neighborhood planning process to encourage redevelopment in brownfield communities through efforts to attract private sector investments and direct public investments to improve existing services and infrastructure.
- Support for the study of policies to encourage revitalization and reuse of derelict properties in brownfield communities. For example, an application might propose a study of local or state historic structure tax credits which provide an incentive for the renovation of existing structures thus reducing the need for open space consumption for new buildings on the urban fringe.

### V. APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposals must be received by EPA through the mail or by hand delivery (e.g., via courier, UPS, or Federal Express) no later than 5pm East Coast time Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Applicants must submit an original and 4 copies of their proposal package. Fax and e-mail submissions will not be accepted. Proposals received after the due date will not be considered. Please see the sections on "Proposal Contents" and "Where to Get More Information" for important additional details.

Following selection, applicants will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there will be a very quick turnaround required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., within four weeks or less

after contacted by EPA after the initial selection process).

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*. Both proposals and formal requests for funding are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential and EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40 CFR part 2, subpart B.).

## VI. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, and documentation of qualifications, and, if applicable, documentation of partner participation. Project descriptions should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required:

### 1. Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter used to submit your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

### 2. Summary Information Page (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

- the title and number of this Request for Initial Proposals (Smart Growth in Brownfields Communities, BFSG03)
- project title and location
- applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)
- type of applicant organization (e.g. nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)
- summary budget information (amount requested from EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)
- 5 to 10 line abstract of proposal

### 3. Project Description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and include a preliminary workplan outlining the project's major tasks, products, and timetable. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets the selection criteria. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 10 page limit. The project description must be no longer than five pages double sided, or 10 pages single sided, must use no smaller than 10 point type and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch. Any information in excess of the 10 page limit will not be considered.

### 4. Budget (does not count against page limit)

The project budget should include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other. If not self-evident, entries under each category should be explained in the budget itself or in the project description.

### 5. Documentation of Qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short bios of all principle staff who will have a major role in the project. Bios must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues.

### 6. Documentation of Partner Participation (does not count against page limit)

If the applicant is including other organizations as part of the project team, the application must include letters from the partners stating their intention to work on and/or contribute funds to the project. These letters must be on the partners' letterhead and must be signed by a responsible official of the partner organization. These letters must be included in the application package and must not be sent separate

from the package.

Notwithstanding any partnering arrangements, the successful applicant must administer the assistance agreement and is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance, including those awarded to partnering organizations, must be awarded under the competitive procurement provisions of 40 CFR 31.36. Subgrants made to partners must be consistent with the definition of that term in 40 CFR 31.3 and the distinction between vendors and subrecipients found in OMB Circular A-133 \_\_\_\_\_.210. Subgrants are also subject to the provisions of 40 CFR 31.37.

#### VII. BUDGET REQUEST AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

EPA expects to have approximately \$400,000 available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle; this is subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 03 budget. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$50,000 or less. Final grants may be negotiated for budget and project periods of up to three-years, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is available. A ceiling of approximately \$150K for the full three years is suggested. EPA expects to award approximately eight to ten assistance agreements under this RFIP.

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds will be considered as an evaluation criterion. Voluntary matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a match must be for costs that EPA can fund. Allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A87.

#### VIII. SELECTION CRITERIA

A proposal must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered:

##### Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained in the "Overview," "Background" and "Activities Eligible for Funding" sections. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project, and the applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in the background section to apply this criterion.

##### Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The project must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b)(3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L.106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1142 (a) and (c). Most of the statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. Grant proposals should emphasize this "learning" concept, as opposed to "fixing" an environmental problem via a well-established method. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

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## **SITES, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, OR SITE PREPARATION.**

### Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

In order to be funded, the project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above. For most of the statutes, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution, or, in the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, to "carrying out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authority, in most cases "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

For example, the activities listed under *Illustrative Sample Activities* (Section IV) would demonstrate their ability to meet criteria 1 and 2 as follows:

- Demonstration of methods to develop a neighborhood action planning process to encourage the environmentally-beneficial revitalization of infill sites. *Serves as a demonstration to reduce the amount of impervious surface in a region by putting new development on existing impervious areas, thereby preventing water quality deterioration (Clean Water Act, or Safe Water Drinking Act).*
- Demonstration of an inclusive visioning process to prepare a plan for development of an infill site as a mixed-use facility to respond to neighborhood needs for services within walking or biking distance. *Demonstrates methods for increasing use of alternative transportation thereby reducing emissions (Clean Air Act).*

### Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

Please note that EPA financial assistance is not intended to be for the direct benefit or use of the federal government. Projects should be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposed projects should clearly and directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals.

### Threshold Criterion 5: Eligible Applicants

The applicant must be a unit of government that is presently designated an EPA Brownfields Showcase Community or a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot.

The threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Proposals which fail any of the threshold criteria will not be considered further. If necessary, EPA may seek additional clarification from the applicant.

### Evaluation Factors

Proposals will also be evaluated against the following six evaluation factors. Each will be scored low, medium or high against each of the factors below. Factor one will be given the greatest weight. It is unlikely that a proposal which scores low on this factor will be funded. All other evaluation factors will be weighted equally. EPA will not seek clarification of evaluation factors.

1. Degree to which the project helps a community to create smart growth. This will be evaluated by the extent to which the project reflects the smart growth principles and the definition of smart growth – development which serves the economy, community, public health and the environment. The principles of smart growth are articulated in the Background section. A project that focuses solely on environmentally friendly building practices (e.g. green building techniques, provision of renewable sources of energy, etc.), without reflecting the smart growth principles will not be considered effective in achieving smart growth and will not score high against this evaluation

factor. Proposals that address a wider range and greater number of smart growth principles will be rated more highly.

Projects should strive to achieve smart growth through either of the three eligible activity categories (described earlier): improving the regulatory climate, changing the approach to individual site redevelopment, or better linking open space preservation and infill development.

2. Degree to which the project demonstrates an ability to be adopted in a systemic way and/or be institutionalized to achieve smart growth over the long term. For example, a one-time provision of technical assistance to support the smart growth redesign of an infill site may be rated lower than the development of a tool which may be adopted by local decision-makers to evaluate the smart growth characteristics of all future site designs, thereby influencing many developments.
3. Degree to which the community is involved in the planning for and execution of the proposed activity, including the extent to which the community is likely to benefit from its impacts. Community-based projects should strive to strengthen the civic pride in and ownership by the community, both through the planning process and in the project's implementation. Applicants are invited to submit additional letters of support (which do not count against the page limit) to demonstrate community involvement, but the nature of community support should be sufficiently addressed and summarized within the ten-page core proposal. All letters of support must be submitted with the proposal, not sent separately.
4. Degree to which the project has a likelihood of success. Projects rated high on this criterion are those which indicate that the individuals or organizations best able to affect change are involved in a substantive way, the timeline for project implementation is realistic and achievable, and the project fosters partnerships among critical institutions and/or businesses to strengthen support for the activity. Applicants are invited to submit additional letters of support (which do not count against the page limit) to demonstrate partnerships with individuals or organizations. Again, the nature of such partnerships should be sufficiently addressed and summarized within the ten-page core proposal. All letters of support must be submitted with the proposal, not sent separately.
5. Degree to which the approach is replicable, and serves as a learning tool for other communities. Projects rated highly on this criterion are those that successfully adopt an innovative approach to a challenge faced by many communities. Proposed activities which appear to respond to a highly unique set of geographical, regulatory, or fiscal factors that are not generalizable are more likely to score lower on this criterion.
6. Degree to which the budget appears to be an efficient use of EPA funds, and is appropriate to complete the tasks proposed. The relative share of administrative costs to overall project costs may be considered; those projects that appear to have a high ratio may be rated lower. Conversely, while matching funds are not required, raters may consider the ability of the project to leverage other sources of funds. [Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any funds counted towards match must be for costs EPA can fund. Allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB Circular A87.] Those funds and their source should be identified in the core proposal and documented in a letter from the contributing organization (see proposal content # 6). Otherwise, no additional narrative is required for this factor, as raters will refer to the budget sheet attached to the proposal.

#### IX. OTHER FACTORS

EPA will carefully consider the applicant's past performance administering federal financial assistance and carrying out projects supported by EPA and other federal agencies. This may include the results of audits conducted by EPA's Office of Inspector General, other federal agencies, or state, local or tribal oversight

entities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their performance history in their proposals and to provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. In making final selections, factors such as overall excellence, geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR Part 31. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

#### X. AWARD MECHANISM

This solicitation falls under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance No. 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants.

EPA expects to use new cooperative agreements to fund approved projects. Cooperative agreements entail substantial federal involvement in the project. Such involvement may include EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; EPA review of all draft and final products; regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls; and/or EPA involvement in selection of key recipient personnel.

#### XI. WHERE AND WHEN TO APPLY

You must submit one original and 4 copies of your full proposal (your full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and documentation of partner participation as described under the section entitled "Proposal Contents"). Please note that the delivery address varies depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery.

If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., Federal Express, Courier, UPS), send it to:

Carlton Eley  
Development, Community, and Environment Division  
U.S. EPA (1417-C EPA West Bldg.)  
1301 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460  
FAX number: 202-566-2868  
E-mail: [eley.carlton@epa.gov](mailto:eley.carlton@epa.gov)

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Carlton Eley  
Development, Community, and Environment Division  
U.S. EPA (Mail Code 1808T)  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20460  
FAX number: 202-566-2868  
E-mail: [eley.carlton@pa.gov](mailto:eley.carlton@pa.gov)

Please also note that there may be substantial delays in mail service to EPA, due to heightened security requirements. Proposals must be received by EPA thru the mail or by hand delivery (e.g. via courier, UPS, or Federal Express) by 5pm east coast time Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. All letters of support must be included in the proposal package. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.



## XII. WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Administrator Whitman's initiative, or resources pertaining to smart growth and brownfields, please go to:

[www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sginitiatives.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sginitiatives.htm)

Applicants with questions about this solicitation should contact:

Carlton Eley  
EPA's Development, Community, and Environment Division  
Phone: 202-566-2841  
E-mail: [eley.carlton@epa.gov](mailto:eley.carlton@epa.gov),

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ Adhir Kackar  
EPA's Development, Community, and Environment Division  
Phone: 202-566-2846  
E-mail: [kackar.adhir@epa.gov](mailto:kackar.adhir@epa.gov)

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the EPA web site ([www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth)). The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFP.

## XIII. AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recipients will be notified of who received an award through a posting of award recipients on the EPA smart growth website ([www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth)). This information will be posted 30 days after EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to each recipient. Awards are expected to be made sometime in the Fall of 2003.

5/9/03